

Vintage Mann News

VMN #27 Summer 2026



Pic: Les Wilson Member 7521

Les pictured in happier times outside Ramsey Court House on one of our VMCC MGP rallies playing chess with a statue of himself.



Ed's Ed

Times are hard, getting harder (?) and we are all pulling in our horns. Every day costs are swooping upwards, particularly fuel/electricity/food.

But how does this effect us as vintage motor cyclists? A worrying trend seems to be the value of our pride and joy, we see real values plummeting, not helped by the auctions off of whole collections. But this is not just happening here, or UK, but worldwide, my Californian contact reports falling prices at their US key auctions, eg MECOM (one of their biggest) and over a dozen more where a brand new Goodman custom made Velocette Scrambler with Thruxton engine was one of the last items to sell at a recent auction and went for an end-of-day hammer price of about what I paid for my rigid MAC.

It's not typical to instruct a major classic vehicle auction for charity, but that's what the late Robert White (from Dorset) stipulated in his will. Jay Leno purchased his whole collection of 17 Brough Superiors last year (to add to his existing horde), with the funds headed entirely to the hospital which Mr. White wanted to support; a cancer treatment centre in an area of Britain not well served. Jay's video (see TheVintagent.com) is a testament to his friend, and a plug for the [upcoming Bonhams auction of the remainder of Robert White's](#) motorcycles, cars, Leicas, etc. It's worth a look!

The eagle-eyed will note I have not covered Trials this time due mainly to the excellent coverage provided by the Secretary's Facebook page. I hear that some members are still frightened to log on to these web pages but facebook.com seems fairly tame, just don't load all your personal details as they are optional. And definitely don't tell them the names of all your friends.

I find I am able to take a closer interest in VMCC events again and while this publication is now virtual, I shall be looking to expand its content a little. So if you have anything to say which you might like to share with other members eg first bike/ problem bike/ biking holiday/ when I were a lad etc. please send me a note (even hand written is fine) and any photos will be copied, immediately returned, and acknowledged if printed.

Or just speak to me at any club night or ride.

Happy biking, Steve Leonards813@gmail.com 494544

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Chairman's Chat – May 2026

Crikey – I can barely believe it - the TT's almost upon us! Two bikes to prepare for the Pre TT Classic and our annual affair on Peel Day on the 4th June to think about. Unfortunately, owing to off Island obligations, I missed the first two Sunday Road runs but was thankfully back for Andy and Angie's super Bob Thomas Road Run. What a great event, blessed with perfect riding weather. Milntown is such a wonderful venue and we are so well looked after by the management who donated a valuable first prize to the winner of Andy's quiz. The lucky blighter was Jon Duncan who won coveted TT hospitality tickets.

The recent AGM went well but was very poorly attended and as alluded to in the previous edition of Vintage Mann I will be standing down as chairman in a years' time. Gareth has replaced Richard as vice chairman in readiness for taking over as chairman in 2027. Of course, lots can happen in the meantime but at least the committee are embracing the idea of a succession plan. Andy Cowie was voted onto the committee but Steve Parker, after a couple of appearances at committee meetings felt it was not for him. It is my intention to remain on the committee.

I've got a "a bee in my bonnet" regarding the Creg. It's something I can't quite put my finger on, but it's never felt like home to me and I'm keen to explore alternatives. The Crosby is willing to host us as is the Grosvenor and the refurbished Liverpool Arms are also showing interest. One idea is we alternate our club night venues. Having said all that, a straw poll of members at Milntown showed there was little if any interest in the subject of club night venues. It must be me!!

Fingers crossed for a dry TT.

All the best.

Rupert

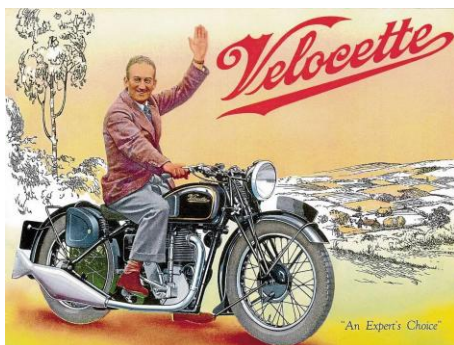


Velocette Roarer 1939/1989



It's TT time in 1989 and myself, living in Torquay at the time, had arranged to ride the 350 miles up the M5/M6 on my BMW 800GS, quite an early one, to meet up with friends from Southport and enjoy the races. Come Mad Sunday and I made my usual visit to Niarbyl Bay for the annual Velo club get together.

Friends Les and Paul were there, and so too were Stanley Woods and Ivan and Grahame Rhodes, spanning the famous Velocette Roarer which Stanley would ride in the forthcoming Classic TT Parade lap. (NB it's 1989)



I met Stanley again at the Velo club meeting that week and asked him of his opinion on the Roarer (which he had only ridden for one lap in practice) – he said it was “a load of” (actual spoken words only to be shared with Velo club officials!) Suffice to say he was not impressed.

I continued to correspond with Stanley into the '90s, purchasing some of his signed prints. In return he forwarded some signed pages of his famous 'Toffee' writing paper.

Steve



Going Spare

BSA B33 1951 500cc

Very handsome bike in Devon red. £4,950ono



Tel: 07624 233226



Triumph suit Cordura tri-tech shell, size 2XL, Tourer jacket 46/48" chest

Carrion riding trousers 40" waist

Cost me new price £330 and £204, top of the range. Warm and totally dry. Suit 6 footer. Slightly too large for me so seldom worn, perfect condition.

£150ono for both but like them to go.

Tel: Steve 494544

DIMEX 'Ultimate Gear' riding trousers

Removeable liner, smart grey camo finish, waist 40", brand new/ still wrapped/ never worn, again too big for me. £20

Tel: Steve 494544

Velocette MSS frame, with s/a

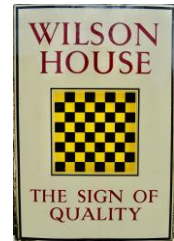
In very good condition. V5 1954, UK reg in my name. £375ono.

Pair of fwh wheels, rims rusty but sound, not damaged £275ono the pair.

Two 3 ½ gal petrol tanks £150 each. Many more Velo parts inc barrels/ pistons/ flywheels/forks etc.

Tel: Steve 494544

If you have anything to sell let us know, next issue Vintage Mann News in Autumn 2026



LES WILSON

Les Wilson was a club member (VMCC member since 1980's) who I always got on well with, going right back he was an active part of organising our early MGP rallies (together with his brother and daughters following Mike Vangucci and Terry Cooper), and he even rode a Velocette.

Following an article I wrote for an earlier newsletter concerning a meeting with a Velo riding petrol pump attendant 50 years ago back home in Manchester, (who I swapped a Venom frame with (as his had broken), Les later approached me over here to admit that he was indeed that guy!

Further deals continued over here including the sale to him of a big tank Venom and some trials bike parts for brother in law Michael, and a swap leaving me with a rebuilt BTH mag. Not in the best of health in later years it was no surprise when he ceased to attend club meetings or rides. I therefore dropped him an email which was replied to recently by Michael advising that Les had unfortunately passed away in January of last year. It had been his expressed wish that no funeral or announcement be made, which was honoured by his family.

Sad regards, Steve

Photo: Les at Ramsey (on cover page)



Les with Michael and Kyrill at a Jurby track day

What's In A Number?

This all started with Marc Mellor publicising his excellent research into the Sheard family and their early forays into the Manx motoring and motorcycle racing scene here on the Isle of Man. He explained that a bike registered MN497 took place in early TT races.



MNH records show that this machine finished the 1914 Junior TT as follows:

TT 1914 JUNIOR TT RESULTS

26	Sheard, Miles	5:27:09.00	34.3	Royal Enfield
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Last year I undertook some further research into early registrations and David Wright has been most helpful in setting me off on the right track. I met with Ruth Sheard, the granddaughter of Thomas Mylchreest Sheard which revealed many items of interest.

MNH research reveals:

- MN497 was first issued on 6/5/1914 to Joseph Mylchreest Sheard of 8 Mona Street Douglas, for a 2 ¾ hp Enfield weighting 150 lbs for private use.
- Records show that JM Sheard did not contest the TT until 1924, OEC mounted



So what is my interest here?

I have long held the registration MN497, firstly on my Venom Clubman, but when that bike was sold to an enthusiast in the UK I retained the number on a retention certificate.

So imagine my surprise when I saw it pop up during a search through the archives of Manx National Heritage.

This deserves further research as I am unable to reconcile some details in MNH race records and I hope to be able to 'reveal all' in the next issue of this publication.

Steve

Thanks to Marc Mellor, MNH and I have been assisted in further research by David Wright.

Book Review

Dear Editors

You have all no doubt read of the recent death of Jeff Smith MBE, aged 92. In a list of British post-war great riders, Jeff's name would be right at the top being one of our greatest off-road riders, described as a "trials master and a motocross maestro" on the cover of my attached earlier book review. As you will read, he won his first-ever trial at the age of 14 and later went on, as a works BSA rider to win many national trials on the immortal 500 Gold Star before turning his attention to scrambles, winning the ACU Scrambles Drivers' Star many times – often racing on a Saturday followed by a national trial the next day.

I met him once when he was the guest of honour at the Carshalton MCC's annual dinner where he presented me with "The Triers Trophy" for my efforts as a novice trials rider.

I do hope that you can find room, once again, for my attached review, as I think that Jeff deserves to be remembered for his great career.

With best regards

Jonathan Hill

"Jeff Smith – official biography"

Trials master, motocross maestro

Author: Ian Berry

Foreword by former world motocross champion Rolf Tiblin

Limited to 1,000 signed copies

Published by Motorsport Publications LLC

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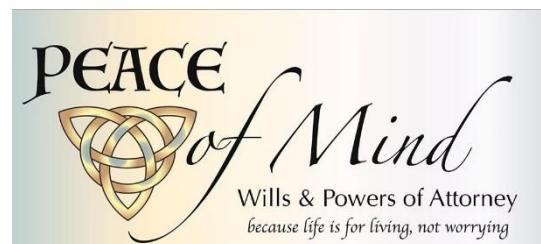
Jeffrey Vincent Smith MBE was born at Colne, Lancashire in 1934. Always very proud of his Lancastrian roots, Jeff carried the red rose of the county on his crash helmet throughout his long riding career. With the advent of the very popular television scrambles, Smith became a household name with his many victories including the Grandstand Trophy and becoming twice world motocross champion.

However, just to judge him on his scrambles achievements alone would be doing the man a great disservice, for he was also one of the most successful trials riders of his time – a multi-winner of the ACU Trials Rider's Star (national championship), the British Experts Trial and the Scottish Six Days Trial, along with gold medals in the International Six Days Trial.

Encouraged by enthusiastic parents, he won his first-ever trial at the age of 14, riding a 250 Matchless, in 1948, Jeff's progress was meteoric. A second class award in the 1951 Victory Trial on a 125 BSA Bantam was followed by premier awards in national trials aboard his father's 500T Norton, he capped his season by taking a gold medal on a factory 500 Norton Dominator in that year's ISDT in Austria.

An indentured apprentice at the BSA Service Department, when the Norton team was disbanded he received full factory support from BSA, being mentored by the legendary Bill Nicholson, riding the immortal 500 Gold Star in trials and later turning his attention to scrambles, winning the ACU Scrambles Drivers' Star many times – often racing on a Saturday followed by a national trial the next day. We read emotively descriptive accounts of the competition between trials legends such as Gordon Jackson (AJS), Johnny Britain (Royal Enfield) and Sammy Miller (Ariel).

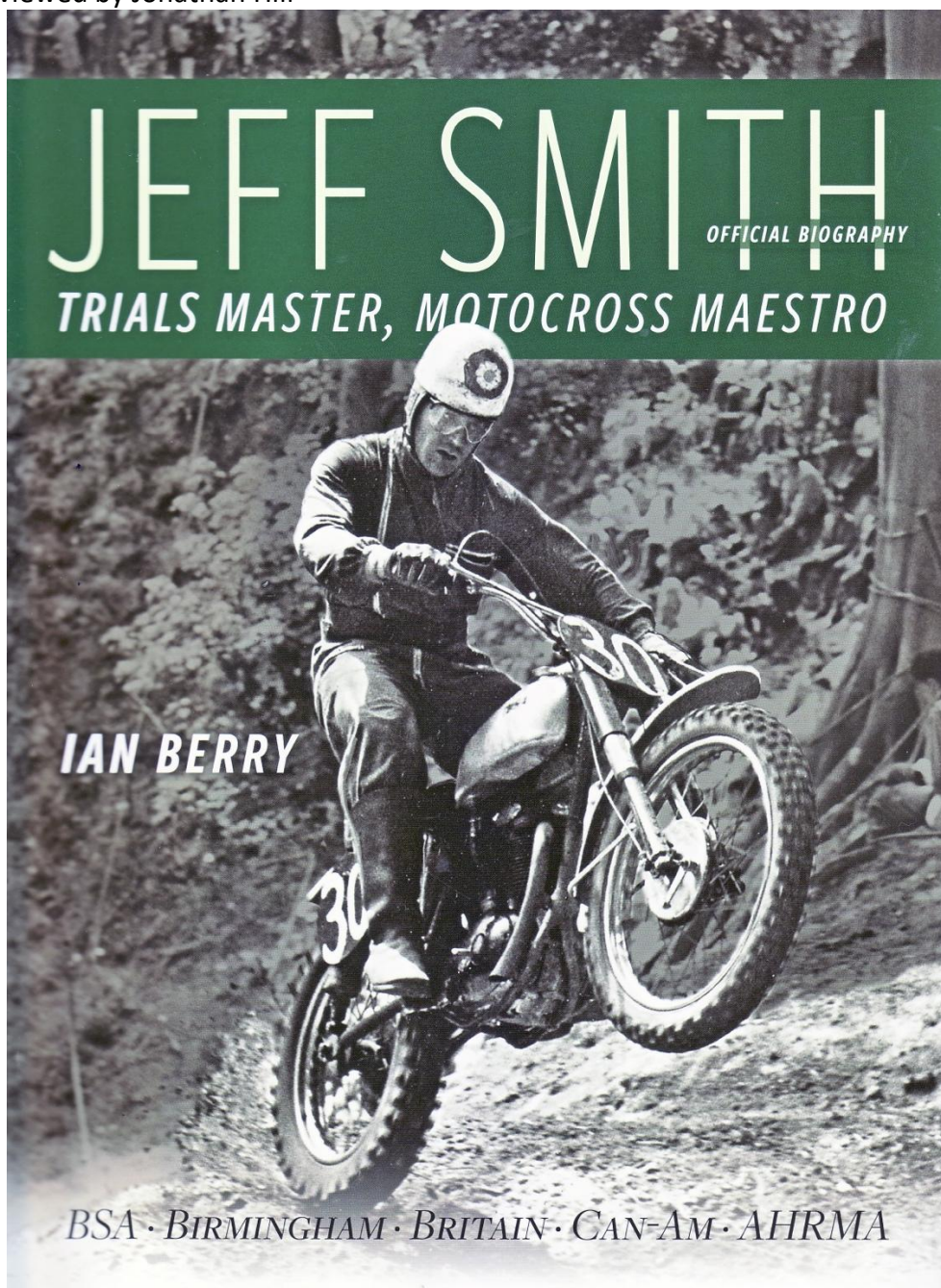
In scrambles we read of the season-long challenges from Dave Curtis (Matchless), Don Rickman (Triumph Metisse) and teammate Arthur Lampkin in their efforts to relieve him of his Scrambles Drivers' Star.



It is interesting to read that in order to beat the all-conquering Swedes on their fabulous Husqvarna and Lito machines, the overweight and obsolete Gold Star had to be replaced by a much lighter and physically less demanding machine, resulting in the world championship-winning 441cc BSA Victor – at over 100lb lighter.

Author Ian Berry is to be congratulated on this excellent, long overdue tribute to one of the world's greatest riders. A large, expensive exceedingly well illustrated 464-page tome (with interesting character vignettes of past masters), it is worth every penny. Thoroughly recommended.

Book reviewed by Jonathan Hill



Re: Jeff Smith MBE

Thanks Jonathan,

Like you I met him once, but this was at the Stafford Show many years ago.

Co-incidentally I own an off-road green laner, built up by another based on one of the BSA ex-works frames - JVS confirmed this was one of the bikes reserved for the 'top-string' riders which he and the works riders rode. I also spoke with Arthur Lampkin who said similar.

The bike now has a Tiger 90 motor (upped to 500cc).

Cheers, Steve

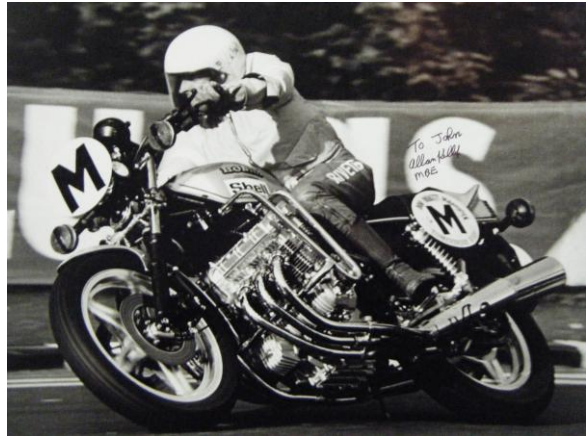
Local interest – the Triumph twin engine was built into this frame by the late Roly Alden, and eventually sold to myself.

J.D.

My 1960s coffee bar days hang out was the Elcap coffee bar in Runcorn, them days it was a little village town now days its a big sprawling metropolis, coffee bar long since gone.

My mates and I would have a blast from Liverpool to Runcorn and meet up with our woolly back mates and some girls that ware not from Liverpool . I use the word blast loosely as we ware riding me on a triumph Tiger cub my first ever motorbike, same for Kenny and Mick, Kenny on a BSA C15 and Mick on Matchless G2 250cc so not a lot of blasting on these bikes [more like blow ups]

The lads from woolly land would take a ride down to a coffee bar we would hang out at Deano's Coffee bar in Southport , nice ride to there. One of the lads Davy Jones was a bit older than we ware and had a bigger bike, some of the other lads also older with bikes we would dream of having ie Dunstall Norton, Triumph Bonneville, BSA gold star. We all became good mates as motorcycles locks in all ages young and older. With me having a Triumph Davy said to me do you want to have a blast on my Bonnie, I had passed my test and jumped at the chance of riding a 1961 Bonneville what a super looking bike [Turner got the style of that bike just right] Well off I went on this giant of a bike wow riding a dream ps I never fell off or stalled it, happy days. As I got older and older and older [think that's enough of that] I never forgot that ride on Dave's Bonnie, sadly Dave never made age 30 not through motorcycles.



Eventually I was able to come across a 1961 bonnie and bought it yippee! The bike looked great but riding it [rose tinted glasses] I rode it for 3 years but was always on pins it was only happy at 70mph it did not like to loiter about with e3134 cams, and the brakes were rubbish not 2Ls on 61 bonnie . It was a bit of a let down after all them years , so I sold it .

But prior to the bonnie - Honda's.



I was in the grandstand 1978 TT I saw for the first time in the flesh the Honda CBX 6 cyl bike, I took a photo of Mike Hailwood by the Hondas the travelling marshals had the use of them and Honda CX500s. Allan Killip chief travelling marshal was one of the riders of the CBX 6. I became friends with Allan. I never called him Kipper, only Allan as a mark of respect. That Honda 6 blew me away I must get one of them, well I did I had 3 of them in all. That bike did not disappoint it was as smooth as silk and looked fantastic, but time caught up with me and they just became too heavy.

But I still ride Triumphs and Hondas but nothing over 340 lb .

Did you ever find a bike you wished for and was a let down?

Cheers. JD



Malta

Prior to visiting this fascinating island some years ago I wrote to the secretary of their Historic Motorcycle Club. Contact is Albert Pisani. Malta is 2/3 the size of IOM with a population of over ½ million, but outside the main cities never feels crowded.

Anyway it's a well established club with a wealth of events, seemingly well organized and including ladies! They certainly take their historic vehicles very seriously. Here's a little of the club's web material (note the reference to choppers!) :-



A BRIEF HISTORY

The main aims of the Historic Motorcycle Club are the preservation, use, appreciation and enjoyment of veteran, vintage and classic motorcycles manufactured prior to the 1st of January 1976.

The club enjoys respect both locally and abroad and is well-known for being one of the most innovative and active vintage vehicle organizations in Malta. The HMC has organized 24-hour marathons in aid of charity, Exhibitions, Rallies, trips to Sicily, a Motorcycle Safety Riding Campaign, International Classic Motorcycle Weekends, cultural tours and others.



ELIGIBILITY

All motorcycles manufactured before January 1976 except choppers are eligible.

EVENTS

One of the secrets of the Club's success lies in the "ride them don't hide them" mentality. Motorcycles were made to be ridden so the club's annual calendar of events includes various motorcycle runs, rallies, skilled riding tests, gymkhanas and club nights.



The HMC also organizes exhibitions where one can admire over a century of local transport heritage and motorcycling history.



RESTORATIONS

The restoration of classic motorcycles is a very important and absorbing part of this hobby. The Historic Motorcycle Club supports its members by providing technical information and research which it has painstakingly collected over the years.



HMC members can also seek help from the VINTAGE MOTOR CYCLE CLUB (VMCC) of Great Britain to which the HMC is officially affiliated. This gives HMC members the right to access loads of archive material. Other services include a vintage tyre and a transfer scheme, a brake block and marque specialist scheme.



FMVA

The HMC is also a founding member of the Federazzjoni Maltija Vetturi Antiki (FMVA). This Federation was the catalyst behind the favourable concessions enjoyed by vintage vehicles in Malta.

OUR SOCIAL FABRIC

Although all the above is very important, the most important component of any club is its members. We pride ourselves on the fact that we run a friendly, relaxed and inviting club that makes people feel welcome. Our events are open to all family members and we especially encourage children and young adults to take up an interest in classic motorcycles.

Although we did not manage to meet up either that time or again a few weeks ago, I did stumble upon a classic car meeting outside the Aquarium up north.



Likely Lads

Pic 1. Triumph Tridents destined for Travelling Marshal service at the TT, pictured outside Horsman's just prior to the 1973 event.



Horsman's of Liverpool had connections with the Isle of Man TT stretching back to 1913 when the firm's founder, Victor Horsman, first rode the event on a Singer. Later, in pre-second world war years, very few TT riders or factories took their race bikes over to the Island in vans. Most would load bikes directly on to the boat and Horsman's was one of the Liverpool concerns who would arrange the garaging of competitors' four-wheeled carrying vehicles, while they went racing on two wheels.

It was just prior to the 1973 TT that the Triumph factory delivered these four Tridents to Horsman's, leaving them in its safe keeping until due to cross to the Island. The bikes had been meticulously prepared for Travelling Marshal duty by factory mechanic Ron Barrett and come departure time, the four young men in the photograph were charged with riding them the short distance to the IOM ferry.

Apart from obvious departures from standard visible in the photo – three of them with Fontana front brakes and one with twin discs, humped seats, slightly downturned bars, rear-set foot control positions - among other modifications were the fitting of close ratio gears (to three of them), while all had a smaller rear sprocket that upped the overall

gearing. Those features were designed to make them a delight at speed on the Mountain Course, but made them a bit of a handful in traffic.

The Horsman's lads were proud to be entrusted with the factory bikes, but after prolonging their rides to the ferry by taking a less than direct route through the thick Liverpool traffic, then inching them up the loading ramps onto the boat, a waiting Ron Barrett told how he was appalled to see smoke pouring from their clutch housings. He said nothing at the time, but on reaching the Island he found it necessary to renew all the clutches.

Horsman's manager Alan Brodrick took the photo prior to the lads' departure. Upon their late return he asked "what kept you?". The reply came "took the wrong turning, got lost". Because they were locals Alan knew that was untrue, although he was really not surprised that they had taken the long way round.

Alan Brodrick had a little IOM history of his own, riding the Clubman's TT and gaining mid-field finishes in 1954 and 1956. However, it was the Clubman's TT of 1955 which generated the following tale. At the time he worked in the motorcycle shop of south-coast dealer (and former World Champion) Bob Foster who was at the TT in 1955 doing Travelling Marshal duty on a BSA Shooting Star. The Clubman's was held over the Clypse Course and Alan had the mis-fortune to fall at Morney Three early in practice and dislocate his shoulder. Stuck at the side of the track, who should come along but TM Bob Foster. Seeing that Alan was not too badly hurt, he limited himself to "Silly bugger, fancy coming all this way just to fall off!", then told him to hop on the back, a painful business, and took him to hospital.

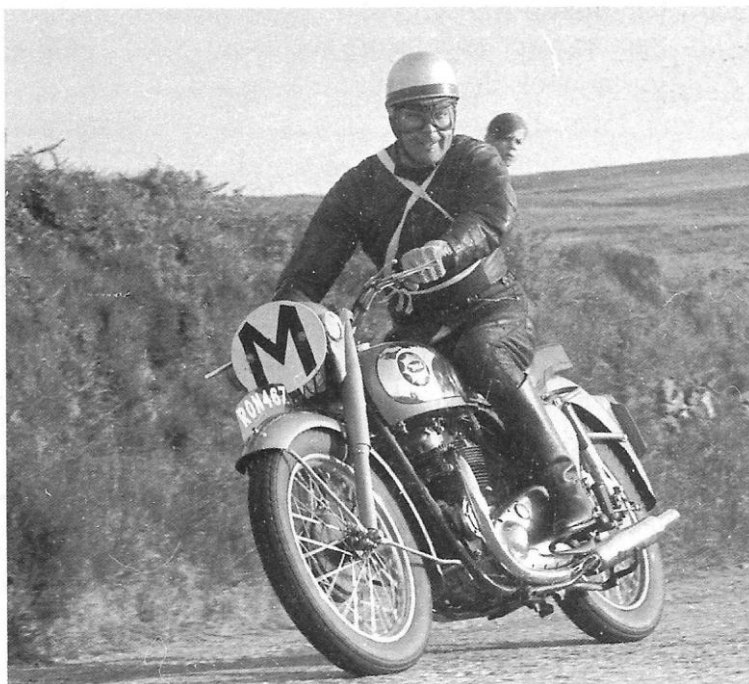
It was at Nobles that, in Alan's words "the surgeon reset my shoulder and wrapped me up like an Egyptian mummy; I could not even get my shirt on. The BSA camp quickly rebuilt my Gold Star with new frame and forks and a lot of other things - fortunately I was insured - and I cast off most of the surgeon's lashings and rode it, one handed, from Liverpool to Poole when I went home a few days later. Clip-on handlebars and rear-set footrests were very uncomfortable with two sound hands, and very foolish with one arm in a sling".

Alan had a high regard for Bob Foster who allowed him and fellow employee Barry Cortvriend to buy new Gold Stars at cost price for the Clubman's TT, gave them a fortnight off at a busy time of the year, paid their boat fares and hotel bills, lent them the firm's van and two hack bikes for course-learning, then let one of his mechanics accompany them to look after the bikes. In Alan's words "all this for two chaps who would be lucky to finish half way down".

Lodge Tyre Co

45-46 Derby Square DOUGLAS Isle of Man IM1 3LP

Pic 2. 350cc World Champion in 1950, Bob Foster has a grin for the photographer, while doing TM duty on the Clypse.



Going back to the photograph of the Tridents at the start of this piece, two of the bikes were destined for use by Travelling Marshals who were, or would become, members of the Isle of Man Section of the VMCC, they being the late, but well-remembered, Alan 'Kipper' Killip and Des Evans.

Pic 3. Tridents on duty. From left: Doug Baird and Austin Allegro 'Roads Open' car. Des Evans, Albert Moule, Triumph mechanic Ron Barrett, George Short (Commando), Jack Harding, 'Kipper' Killip.



END 830 words
David Wright

VOC ride today

Iain,

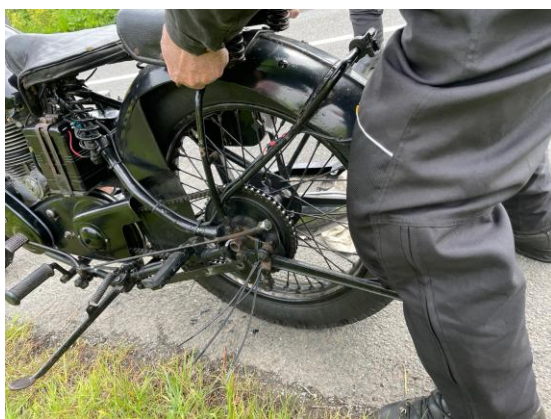
A few poor photos for you.

The 'off' belonged to Graham Kneale when his rear nearside frame broke at the joint of the frame/rear wheel spindle/rear brake torsion arm.

I was directly behind him and suddenly it looked for all the world like the famous 1930's pic of Tyrell Smith at Glen Helen!



Plus a puff of smoke as the rear tyre skidded to a halt. Safely of course and Graham kept it all together.



Four of us stopped (me and Norman and the 2 modern bikers) and I held the bike upright while Graham undid what he could of the bent/broken bits with his riding tool kit. Norman of course had a stock of strong cable ties in his tool box and between them they bodedged up a temporary repair so strong that it got Graham home riding slowly with the 4 of us

shadowing him for safety! Following closely behind I can confirm that the back wheel was ploughing a furrow all of its own!

All in all quite an exciting afternoon ride.

Steve

Jolly Boys 2026

Tour of Lancs Pennines/Yorkshire Dales

Following a series of corporate shenanigans, our spiritual home at Morecambe returns to us. The hotel may be basic but it's handy and cheap.

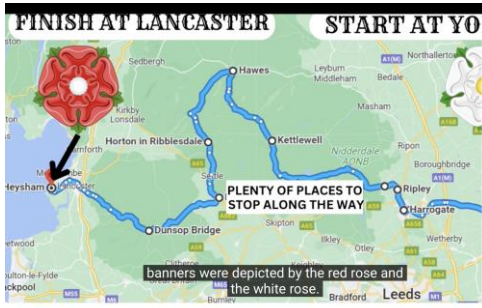
We have all booked B&B only so we shall be popping out each evening to one of the many pubs/bars/restaurants which are only a short walk away, also Wetherspoons in town.



A map is included to give you a bit of a clue – we shall be visiting Yorkshire Dales and Pennines (via the Trough of Bowland). We have been invited on a very special visit to the home and workshop of Richard and Lynda Lancaster at Wrea Green (close to Kirkham on the map). Lynda has insisted on serving lunch too.

Furnitureland

West Street RAMSEY IM8 1DB
Sponsors of the VMCCIOM Trials Championship



Three wise, er?

- No you can't change your mind, it's getting too late
- No they don't take Manx notes in Lancs/Yorks, (they are not legal tender in UK, bartop talk of sterling all irrelevant) - get your UK beer vouchers beforehand at the Steam Packet or Airport cash dispensers, or walk into Morecambe town centre which may have a working cash dispenser left. But everywhere seems to take cards for food/beer.
- Yes the riding route from ferry to Strathmore Hotel is dead easy, but let's keep together.
- Yes we need petrol, we usually all fill up beyond far end of Morecambe prom (Bolton le Sands) 1st gas station on the left. Stick together please.
- In the Lakes/Dales you must pretend every gas station you see is the last one in the world, as it may be, and it's a bit hilly for pushing your bike far.
- Yes your mobile phone may come in very handy within the group, but pretty useless if it's turned off! I have no idea what emergency or bulletin might befall us and why we might need to contact everybody pdq. Reception can range from poor to zero. Please remind me of your mobile numbers for circulation within the group (only).
- So a reminder - why do you have to keep your phone turned on? In case we need to ring YOU
- Yes there is a good bar in the hotel but please pay yourself, evening meals are NOT included this year, but free evening entertainment is promised (more bingo?)
- How much do I have to pay? Dependant on your hotel booking – Pay me nothing we've all done our own this year, cheap as chips.

Der Ridefuhrer